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THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON HIV/AIDS UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK, MAY 31 – JUNE 2, 2006

At the conclusion of the high level meeting on June 2, 2006 the General Assembly adopted the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. The three day meeting was well participated by Civil Society representatives, faith based organizations, people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). The civil society participants reminded the governments that they have failed to keep the promise.

The AIDS pandemic has spread for the past 25 years; more than 65 million people have been infected with HIV/AIDS; more than 25 million people have died of AIDS, and 40 million are currently living with HIV/AIDS. AIDS has orphaned more than 15 million children worldwide. The Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS has estimated that US\$ 20 to 30 billion per annum is needed by 2010 to support rapidly scaled-up AIDS responses in low and middle-income countries.

The Political Declaration reaffirms the 2001 Declaration, and acknowledges the failures of the past five years. Feminization of the pandemic is an issue of great concern as women now represent 50 per cent of the people living with HIV and so the need for focused attention to reduce gender inequalities and all forms of violence against women and girls. As half of all new HIV infections occur among children and young people under the age of 25, the need for information, skills and knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS among young people is stressed in the Declaration.

The Member States have committed themselves to pursue all necessary efforts to increase nationally sustainable and comprehensive responses to prevent, treat, care and support, with the full and active support of people living with HIV themselves.

We encourage all VIVAT members to read the political declaration from your local perspective, as well as the statement and report from your government at the UN Review and High-Level Meeting.

For those of you working with PLWHA we encourage you to hold discussions with people living with HIV about the Political declaration and meet with government leaders in your locality and discuss and give suggestions to them about the possibility of networking with them and the PLWHA in keeping the promise.

For more information visit:

Political Declaration, 2 June 2006:
<http://www.un.org/ga/aidsmeeting2006/declaration.htm>

National government statements at the Meeting:
<http://www.un.org/ga/aidsmeeting2006/statements.html>

National government reports on their efforts to fulfill the 2001 Declaration of Commitment:
http://www.ungasshiv.org/index.php/en/ungass/meeting_ungass_targets/2006_review

Shadow reports written by civil society from more than 40 countries:
http://www.ungasshiv.org/index.php/en/ungass/shadow_reports_2006

THE NINTH SPECIAL HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL WITH BWIS, WTO AND UNCTAD

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) held its ninth special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs), World Trade Organization (WTO) and UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) at UN Headquarters on April 24, 2006 on the theme "Coherence, Coordination and Cooperation in the Context of the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the 2005 World Summit Outcome".

In his summary of the proceedings, the President of Economic and Social Council noted the positive developments such as continuing world economic growth, rising Official Development Assistance (ODA) contributions, debt relief to some of the poorest nations and

growing private investments to developing countries. But he also warned that some developing countries might not achieve the MDGs with the persistence of growing global imbalances. For more information on the President's report visit: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ECOSOC-2006-Summary.doc>

VIVAT was member of NGO task force to prepare "talking points" for submission to NGO/Civil Society spokesperson and actively participated in the pre and post event panel discussions on Financing for Development organized jointly by New York based NGOs and Washington based NGOs.

FOURTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, MAY 1 – 12, 2006

The just concluded Fourteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 14) focused on review of progress made in the following areas: Energy for Sustainable Development; Industrial Development; Air pollution/ Atmosphere; and Climate Change. CSD 15 will tackle the same themes but will focus on the implementation phase.

Energy was the main issue. Many governments expressed concern about the high prices of oil. Renewable energy sources like solar, wind, tidal, small-scale or micro dams were discussed but most member states stressed the more feasible alternatives were "cleaner" fossil fuels and large or mega dams. The major groups did their part. The NGOs and Farmers reminded the member states that access to energy is a

prerequisite for halving poverty by 2015 and that life without energy is a poverty trap. Debt burden was also one block to development of poor countries. Women and Indigenous Peoples raised the issue of unsustainable lifestyle and presented alternative models. The loudest voice it seemed came from the Youth and Children. They reminded the body of the urgency of the situation, that the future is more than their legacy; it is their lives!

Development, to be truly development, must be sustainable. VIVAT International is a member of the NGO major group and took active part in Asian Caucus. For more details on CSD 14 visit:

<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd14/review.htm>

THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues held its Fifth Session (PFII 5) from May 15-26, 2006 at UN Headquarters, New York. The theme was: "The Millennium Development

Goals and Indigenous Peoples: Re-defining the Millennium Development Goals". PFII 5 drew thousands of participants from all over the world making it one of the biggest gatherings at

UN Headquarters. For the first time, the opening session was held in the General Assembly Hall and most participants took that as a positive sign.

The statements and reports reiterated the need to do more if the MDGs are to be achieved. The Indigenous Peoples (IP) must be included in local, national and international discussions and deliberations on programs especially if these directly affect them. Effort should be made to make IP more visible. There were clamors for more data collection and data disaggregation; human rights approach to development; gender equality; teaching indigenous languages in schools and cultural sensitivity especially in maternal health care to name a few. The Forum urged developed and developing countries to adopt national processes to implement the Millennium Development Goals, with “the full and effective” participation of their indigenous communities.

Rodolfo Stevenhagen, Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples, in his report noted the “bias against indigenous rights that still existed

among many participants in political life” and recommended the institution of mechanisms for participation and consultation especially for legislation concerning natural resources and the development process. There is truly a need for a special mechanism for Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Thus the forum recommended the adoption of the most recent version of Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the Member States hopefully during the 61st General Assembly when they convene in September 2006.

Gretta Fernandes, Reynaldo Jimenez and Aseli Raass, SVD, actively participated in the sessions. VIVAT organized a side event together with the International Federation of Social Workers entitled “Indigenous Children and Families in a Landscape of Risk: Challenges and Solutions in Realizing Millennium Development Goals”. Using a PowerPoint presentation, Aseli Raass shared his work with the aborigines of Central Australia. VIVAT joined the Asian and Youth Caucus. For more information on PFII 5 visit: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/session_fifth.html

NETWORK OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) IN INDORE, M.P., INDIA



A three-day workshop was conducted jointly by the Indian Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (INP+) and VISHWAS from May 11 to 13, 2006 to enlighten the PLWHA of Indore about the existence of a national network



and its benefits. A member of INP+, HIV positive himself, facilitated the first part of the workshop from the perspective of the PLWHA.

He said the main constraint to treatment and manageability of the disease is ignorance. Not

many Indian PLWHA know that the Indian Government is subsidizing AIDS treatment particularly testing for AIDS. What is needed is networking. Networking not only gives the PLWHAS proper access for treatment but also provides a ready-made support group.

Mr. K. K. Abraham, President of INP+ informed the gathering that HIV is a manageable disease and HIV positive people can do all their work themselves. But he stressed the need for networking especially in educating and empowering the PLWHA. Networks can play a big role in facilitating service delivery from Government. He lauded the efforts of VISHWAS in the formation of the network. The network has to get the stamp of Government approval, with the help of both the Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations to achieve the objectives.

The PLWHA who were present for the workshop identified five targets/objectives:

- Empowerment of women by giving them income generation programs and to work for the acceptance of women and widows in the family.
- Education to children beyond high school.

- Bringing the PLWHA to the mainstream of society.
- Ensuring their right to inherited/parental property.
- Getting rid of stigma among health workers (doctors, nurses etc.) and the need to bring behavior change.

During the workshop, the state level network emerged consisting of two bodies, the General Body and the Working Committee. The General Body will discuss and decide the issues to be addressed and the Working Committee will strive to achieve the objectives. A seven-member Executive Committee was formed consisting of President, Vice President, Secretary, Joint Secretary, Treasurer and two Working Committee members.

Some of the special guests during the workshop were Mrs. Shradha Bose, Deputy Director, MPSACS, Preethi Thomas, SSpS, Provincial Leader – SSpS India Central, Mrs. Divya Verma, Programme Officer, ILO-Delhi and John Panthalipadan, Director of Saathi, Ujjain. (Submitted by Jaisa Anthony, e-mail dated June 12, 2006)

On June 8, 2006, the General Assembly elected President of its 61st Session, Ambassador AL KHALIFA of Bahrain.

Important Days to Remember

International Day of Cooperatives- July 1
World Population Day – July 11
International Youth Day- August 12

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